
Manner: NATURAL

A death that is classified as natural comes under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner because of the sudden and unexpected nature of the death, because there is no physician who has knowledge or awareness of the decedent's condition, or when circumstances surrounding death arouse suspicion. In these situations, the Medical Examiner becomes responsible for certification of death. It should be stressed that the natural deaths investigated by the Medical Examiner are not representative of all natural deaths in the general population, because these jurisdictional considerations introduce a significant bias.

In 2002, there were 663 deaths attributed to natural causes that came under the jurisdiction of the King County Medical Examiner, representing 39% (663/1,683) of the cases investigated. Seventy-five percent (494/663) of these deaths were certified by the King County Medical Examiner, and 25% (169/663) were certified by attending physicians who had knowledge of the decedent's medical condition. Autopsies were performed in 71% (350/494) of the deaths certified as natural by the King County Medical Examiner, which includes autopsies performed in all 16 deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Deaths categorized as "congestive heart failure" were certified by physicians outside of the King County Medical Examiner's Office who did not certify specific type of cardiovascular disease.

The data presented in this section are derived from the 663 natural deaths under the King County Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. Cardiovascular disease accounted for the greatest proportion of natural deaths. Most deaths in which an autopsy was not performed were certified as due to "probable arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease".

Table 5-1 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths in 2002

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
CARDIOVASCULAR	
5	Aortic aneurysm/dissection
162	Arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD)
3	Bacterial endocarditis
3	Cardiac dysrhythmia
10	Cardiomyopathy
2	Congenital heart disease
3	Congestive heart failure
64	Hypertensive ASCVD / hypertensive heart disease
1	Myocarditis
128	Probable arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease
1	Valvular heart disease
10	Other
392	TOTAL CARDIOVASCULAR
CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM	
10	Epilepsy (idiopathic & other non-traumatic etiologies)
3	Meningitis
8	Spontaneous intracerebral hemorrhage
7	Spontaneous rupture of aneurysm
7	Other
35	TOTAL CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM
ENDOCRINE	
5	Diabetic ketoacidosis
5	Diabetes mellitus
2	Other
12	TOTAL ENDOCRINE
GASTROINTESTINAL	
1	Bacterial peritonitis
2	Gastrointestinal hemorrhage
1	Obstruction
4	Perforating ulcer
3	Other
11	TOTAL GASTROINTESTINAL

Table 5-1 (Cont.) Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths in 2002

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
	HEPATIC
4	Cirrhosis
2	Fatty liver
5	Hepatic failure
3	Other
14	TOTAL HEPATIC
	MALIGNANCY
3	Breast
1	Colon
16	Lung
1	Pancreas
3	Rectum
13	Other
37	TOTAL MALIGNANCY
	OTHER PROCESSES
33	Chronic ethanolism
5	HIV / AIDS
13	Infection
1	Labor/Delivery/Prematurity
16	Sepsis
16	Other
84	TOTAL OTHER PROCESSES
	RESPIRATORY
1	Asthma
25	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
21	Pneumonia
10	Pulmonary thromboembolus
16	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
5	Other
78	TOTAL RESPIRATORY
271	TOTAL Non-cardiovascular Cause of Death
392	TOTAL Cardiovascular Cause of Death
663	Total NATURAL DEATHS under KCMEO Jurisdiction, 2002

Graph 5-1

Deaths Due to Natural Causes in 2002

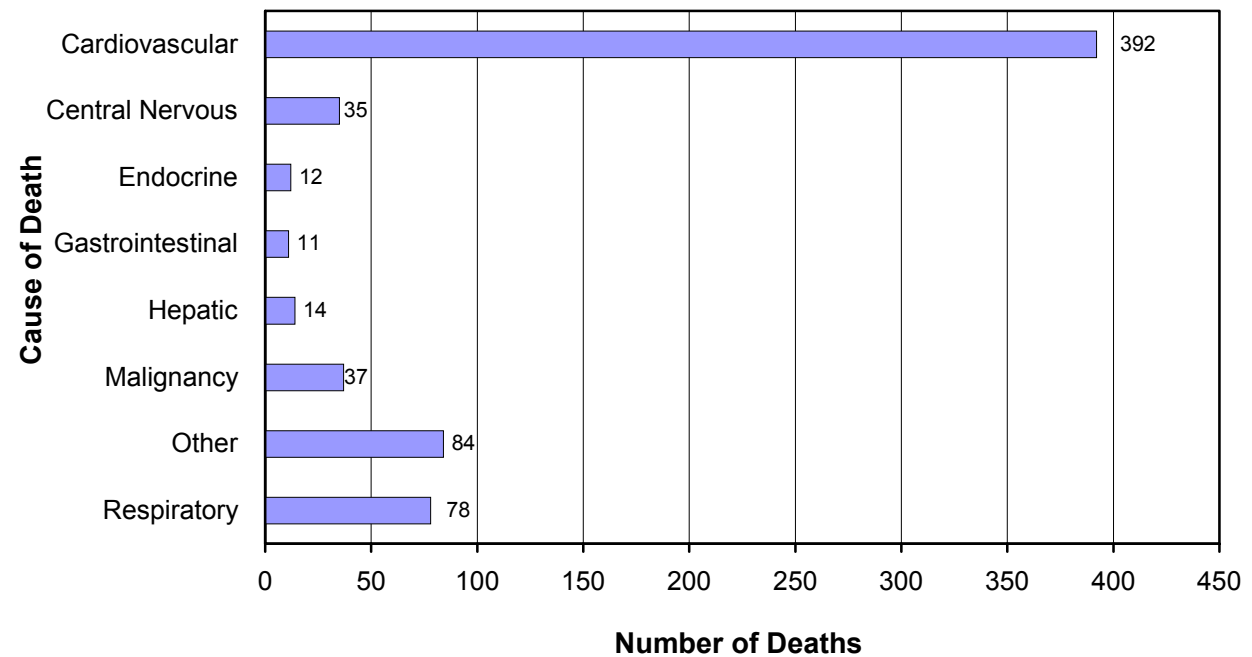


Table 5-2 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Race of the Decedent

DISEASE PROCESS/ GENDER	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER		
Cardiovascular	336	27	21	3	5		392
<i>Male</i>	249	24	15	3	4	295	
<i>Female</i>	87	3	6	0	1	97	
Central Nervous	29	3	2	0	1		35
<i>Male</i>	16	2	1	0	1	20	
<i>Female</i>	13	1	1	0	0	15	
Endocrine	8	4	0	0	0		12
<i>Male</i>	7	4	0	0	0	11	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Gastrointestinal	10	0	1	0	0		11
<i>Male</i>	2	0	1	0	0	3	
<i>Female</i>	8	0	0	0	0	8	
Hepatic	14	0	0	0	0		14
<i>Male</i>	8	0	0	0	0	8	
<i>Female</i>	6	0	0	0	0	6	
Malignancy	31	4	0	2	0		37
<i>Male</i>	19	4	0	2	0	25	
<i>Female</i>	12	0	0	0	0	12	
Other	72	5	3	2	2		84
<i>Male</i>	55	4	3	1	1	64	
<i>Female</i>	17	1	0	1	1	20	
Respiratory	55	13	5	5	0		78
<i>Male</i>	33	8	2	4	0	47	
<i>Female</i>	22	5	3	1	0	31	
Undetermined	0	0	0	0	0		0
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	555	56	32	12	8		663
Percent	84%	8%	5%	2%	1%		

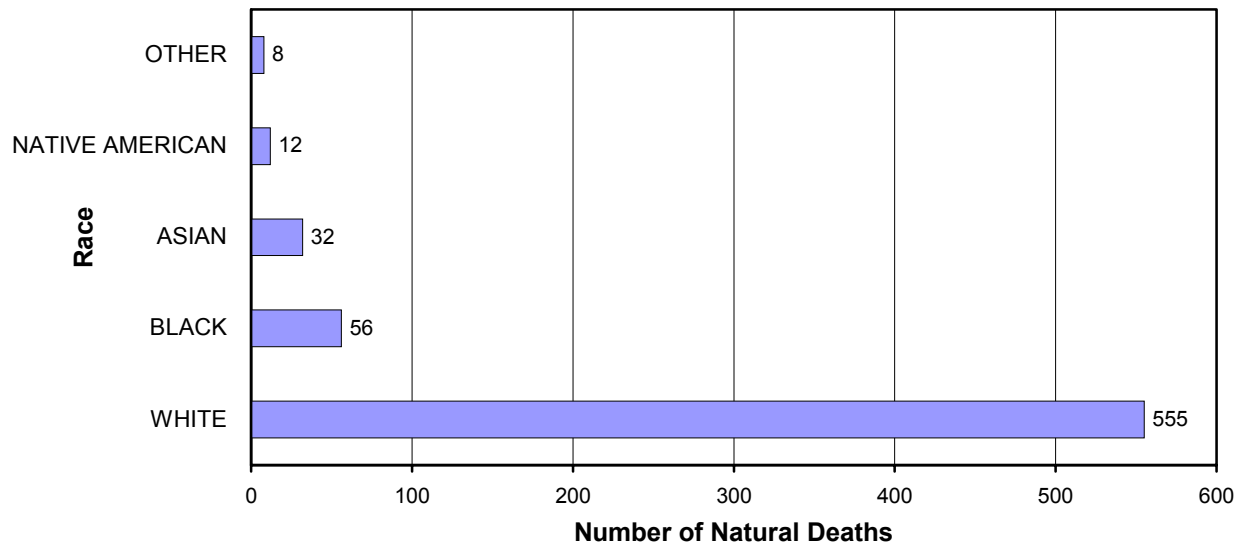
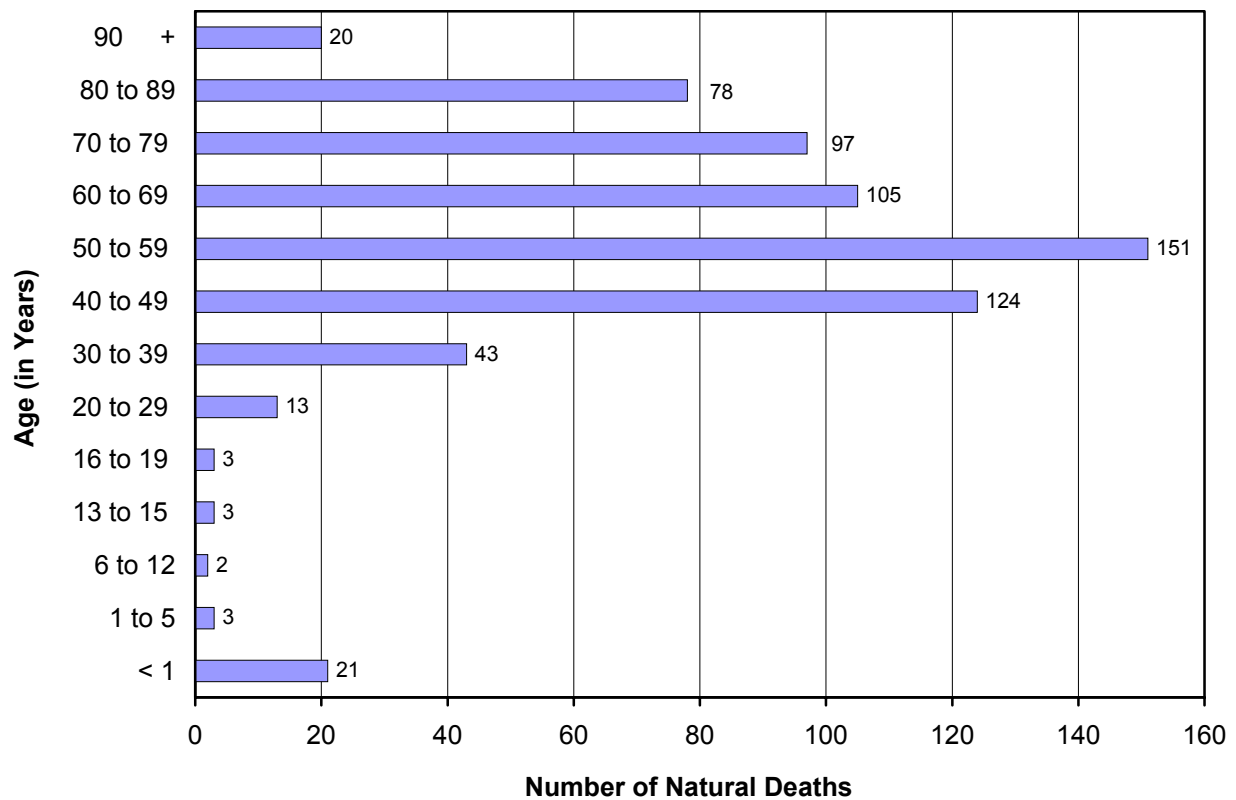
Graph 5-2 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Race of the Decedent**Graph 5-3 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Age Group of the Decedent**

Table 5-3 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Age Group of the Decedent

AGE GROUP (YEARS)																
METHOD/ GENDER	< 1	1 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 to 89	90 +	SUB TOTAL	TOTAL	
Cardiovascular	1	1	0	2	2	4	20	57	92	75	70	51	17		392	
Male	1	1	0	2	2	1	16	44	81	65	52	24	6	295		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	13	11	10	18	27	11	97		
Central Nervous	1	1	0	0	0	3	4	4	6	3	4	7	2		35	
Male	1	1	0	0	0	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	20		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	1	2	5	1	15		
Endocrine	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	1	0	3	2	0		12	
Male	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	1	0	3	1	0	11		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1		
Gastrointestinal	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	2	2	0		11	
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	3		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	8		
Hepatic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	7	1	0	0	0		14	
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	0	8		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	6		
Malignancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	8	9	9	5	0		37	
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	7	7	3	0	25		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	2	2	2	0	12		
Other	2	1	2	1	1	2	6	37	20	8	1	3	0		84	
Male	1	0	2	0	0	2	5	27	18	6	0	3	0	64		
Female	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	10	2	2	1	0	0	20		
Respiratory	17	0	0	0	0	3	6	12	14	9	8	8	1		78	
Male	8	0	0	0	0	2	4	7	9	6	7	4	0	47		
Female	9	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	5	3	1	4	1	31		
Undetermined	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Total	21	3	2	3	3	13	43	124	151	105	97	78	20		663	
Percent	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	6%	19%	23%	16%	15%	12%	3%			

Table 5-4 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Gender of the Decedent

CIRCUMSTANCES	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Cardiovascular	295	97	392
Central Nervous	20	15	35
Endocrine	11	1	12
Gastrointestinal	3	8	11
Hepatic	8	6	14
Malignancy	25	12	37
Other	64	20	84
Respiratory	47	31	78
Undetermined	0	0	0
Total	473	190	663
Percent	71%	29%	

Table 5-5 Natural Cause Deaths and Blood Alcohol Test Results

METHOD	TESTED		NOT	TOTAL
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	TESTED	
Cardiovascular	53	196	143	392
Central Nervous System	3	18	14	35
Endocrine	3	4	5	12
Gastrointestinal	0	5	6	11
Heptic	4	4	6	14
Malignancy	0	7	30	37
Other Processes	17	15	52	84
Respiratory	1	39	38	78
Total	81	288	294	663
Percent	12%	43%	44%	